



**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND**

**DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND TRAINING**



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# **Workforce Investment Act Annual Report**

**Program Year 2001**

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*Table of Contents*

|   |    |
|---|----|
| A Message from the Executive Director.....    | 3  |
| The Workforce Investment Act – Year Two.....  | 4  |
| The Human Resource Investment Council.....    | 5  |
| The Local Workforce Investment Boards         |    |
| Strategic Planning.....                       | 6  |
| Rhode Island’s One Stop System                |    |
| Strategic Planning.....                       | 6  |
| NetWORKri system Activities – Highlights..... | 7  |
| Rhode Island’s Comprehensive Centers.....     | 8  |
| Commitment to Collaboration                   |    |
| A Business Partnership.....                   | 10 |
| Youth Councils.....                           | 11 |
| Youth Programs                                |    |
| Program Year 2001 – Program Highlights        |    |
| About Face.....                               | 11 |
| YouthBuild Providence.....                    | 12 |
| Family Resources.....                         | 12 |
| System Review and Evaluation.....             | 13 |
| Cost Benefit Analysis.....                    | 15 |
| WIA Financial Statement.....                  | 16 |

## ***A Message from the Executive Director of the State Workforce Investment Board***

The Boards, administrators and staff of Rhode Island's Workforce Development System have worked diligently this past year to ensure that our statewide workforce delivery system is the first choice for employers and jobs seekers.

Under the leadership of the Human Resource Investment Council and in coordination with the Greater Rhode Island and Providence/Cranston Workforce Investment Boards, this vision is closer to becoming a reality.

Our focus has been on strengthening the partnership between the business community and the state/local workforce systems. Through the active and enthusiastic participation of private sector members on both the state and local boards, Rhode Island's approach to workforce development is more closely aligned with addressing the specific needs of businesses. During the coming year we will continue to build on our relationships with our business partners and through this collaboration we will strive to achieve high-level outcomes. The HRIC and LWIBs are committed to helping employers and workers meet the competitive skill demands of today's workplace.



**Dr. Lee H. Arnold**  
**Director**

I am pleased to report that for this past year Rhode Island achieved or surpassed the adult and dislocated worker negotiated WIA performance levels as well as the customer satisfaction levels. The following pages highlight some of the state's achievements of which we are most proud. I am pleased to present my Workforce Investment Act Annual Report for Program Year 2001.

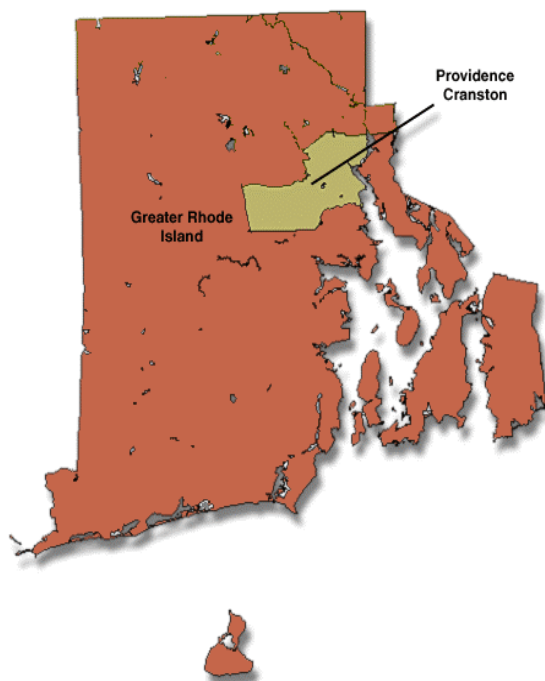
## ***The Workforce Investment Act – Year Two***

For Rhode Island's workforce development system, July 1, 2000 through June 30, 2001 was the first full year of WIA implementation. It has been a year in which the system began adapting to the changes and challenges inherent in the legislation.

Under the WIA framework Rhode Island has identified two Workforce Investment Areas to deliver service to the state.

The Greater Rhode Island WIA comprises 37 of the 39 cities and towns, with the Providence Cranston Workforce Investment Area responsible for the remaining two cities.

Within each of these two primary service delivery areas, **netWORKri** is the One-Stop delivery system with 6 centers. While the inception of the Centers began during 1999 with the award of a One-Stop Implementation Grant, the last Center opened its doors in June 2000. As a result of its monitoring reviews, in the fall of 2001, the two Local Workforce Boards recommended the development of a strategic plan for **netWORKri**. This effort offered staff and partners the opportunity to look within the system to assess strengths and weaknesses while identifying those external opportunities that had an impact on the future of Rhode Island's delivery system. In addition to the strategic planning process, the Center staff spent considerable time and effort refining their delivery mechanism and strengthening partnerships. All of this has led to a more efficient operation with a single focus on optimum service delivery to the customer.



Program Year 2001 was also a year for strengthening partnerships within the workforce development system. In particular, the strong support of the Business Community in leading and guiding the local WIBs continued to have a positive impact on the system. It is through this group's committed participation that there has been an on-going review and evaluation of current practices in an effort to develop "best practices".

## ***The Human Resource Investment Council***

### ***The State Workforce Investment Board***

The Council's priority during Program Year 2001 was to foster collaboration among the partners in the workforce development system in its continuing effort to address the needs of the business community. With shrinking federal funds and state budget deficits, leveraging resources has been essential for the system to continue to meet the

needs of Rhode Island's citizens. Below is a list of highlights of a few of the Council's accomplishments during this past program year.

- The Council continues to prioritize incumbent worker training through the use of the *Employee Investment Grant* program. These grants are available to employers with 100 or fewer employees to retrain workers for new technologies or systems. Funding of up to \$10,000 is available. The Local Workforce Investment Boards are responsible for administering this program on behalf of the HRIC. In line with meeting the needs of employers, The *Excellence Through Training Grant* program has been operational since 1993. Nearly 750 Rhode Island businesses have been awarded more than \$12.3 million to sharpen their competitive edge. Many of these companies have reported tremendous gains in productivity and profitability.
- The HRIC continued its work to develop a Job Corps Center at the former Ladd School in Exeter. The Center will have the capacity to house 200 students in a campus setting, and has lined up an enthusiastic and committed array of local businesses to serve on the Center Industry Council. Local merchants include Wal-Mart, the Rhode Island Seafood Council, CVS, Electric Boat, ON Semiconductor, The Rhode Island Builders Association, and others. The Center will offer training in the following clusters: Culinary Arts, Health Services, Financial Services, Construction, Information Technology, and Manufacturing.
- The HRIC recognizes that learning is a life-long process that doesn't end when a person graduates from high school, college or a trade school. During this past program year, the HRIC supported a number of innovative programs to promote continuous, life-long learning including the Rhode Island Skills Commission, Jobs for Ocean State Grads and the School-to-Career program.
- While most entrepreneurs have the motivation to succeed, the HRIC recognizes that drive and ambition alone don't always guarantee success. Designers, inventors and even established businesses can also face hurdles in generating new product ideas or turning new ideas into profitable product lines. To help overcome these challenges, the HRIC invested \$700,000 over a three-year period in three organizations that provide direct support to Rhode Island's entrepreneurs in the form of training, mentoring and access to capital. The three organizations are the Center for Design & Business, the Center for Women & Enterprise and the Rhode Island MicroEnterprise Association.

## ***The Local Workforce Investment Boards***

### ***Strategic Planning***

Rhode Island's two Workforce Investment Boards are comprised of locally appointed members of the community with a private sector business majority. These Boards have continued to evolve throughout PY01 by developing and refining the committee structure. It is at the committee level that the majority of the work of the Board is accomplished. The active participation of the members and in particular, the leadership of private sector entities, has strengthened both the Greater Rhode Island and Providence Cranston Boards.

The Workforce Boards and partners began a strategic planning process which offered the opportunity to assess both strengths and weaknesses and to set goals for the next 12 to 24 months. More specifically, focus was on issues such as:

- Increasing and improving outreach efforts to the employer community in an attempt to better understand both short and long-term training needs
- Developing/Improving literacy skills in the workplace
- Developing stronger linkages with the education community to improve coordination with the WIA system
- On-going Board Development to increase awareness of the role of the Board in the workforce development system

### ***Rhode Island's One-Stop System – netWORKri Strategic Planning***

The last **netWORKri** Center opened in June 2000 bringing the total number of One-Stop locations in the State to six. As a result of the Workforce Investment Board's monitoring sessions conducted in the fall of 2001, the system and its partners undertook a year-long strategic planning effort which resulted in a planning document to be used as a guide in the continuous improvement of the operation.

The yearlong undertaking consisted of partner staff meetings in each center, partner management team meetings, focus groups and training sessions with staff from Northeastern University. These sessions resulted in the following discussions:

- Specifically identifying strengths, weaknesses, restrictions to progress, opportunities for improvement
- Revisiting the USDOL principles guiding One-Stop implementation: ***Universality, Customer Choice, Integration, and Accountability.*** Recognizing that the system has made great strides in adopting these principles, the planning process provided an opportunity to reflect on these ideals as it moved forward.
- Evaluating each center in terms of customer demographics, the physical environment, and the level of partnerships that currently exist. This information was used and will continue to be used for system improvement.

The PY2003 **netWORKri** Strategic Planning document has been shared with administrative staff from all partner agencies in an effort to achieve the goals and strategies outlined in the report.

### ***Rhode Island's One-Stop System – netWORKri netWORKri System Activities - Highlights***

- During PY 2001, Rhode Island received a Work Incentives Grant to enhance the **netWORKri** system for people with disabilities. Staff was hired specifically to assist the disabled in returning to work. As a recognition of Rhode Island's efforts to address the needs of those with disabilities, USDOL Region I recognized the **netWORKri** system with the One-Stop Accessibility Award. This achievement honors RI's efforts in creating an entire One-Stop system that is truly accessible to the disabled.
- In striving to improve services to the employer and business community, Regional Employer Service networks were established in three areas with plans for additional groups scheduled during this current program year. Job development staff met on a regular basis at the local **netWORKri** centers to identify methods to outreach to the business community. Approximately 44 state and local organizations participated.
- **netWORKri** partner staff also participated in numerous employer events during the program year including Business Expo with over 10,000 visitors, the Small Business Advisory Forum, the Secretary of State's 2001 – A Small Business Odyssey, The Providence Journal's Diversity Job Fair, to name a few.

## ***Rhode Island's One-Stop System – netWORKri Centers Program Year 2001 – Center Activity Highlights***

### **Rhode Island's Comprehensive Centers**



PAWTUCKET **netWORKri** Center



PROVIDENCE **netWORKri** Center

- The Pawtucket Center established an exclusive hiring arrangement with the City of Pawtucket's Fire and Police Dept. In August and September 2001, 300 police department applicants applied for jobs through the Pawtucket Center. Staff reviewed applications ensuring proper documentation and scheduling potential officers for agility testing. On the heels of that successful collaboration, the City requested the provision of the same recruitment service for firefighters. A total of 203 applicants were pre-screened. The Center's efforts with the City continued with the organization and administration of promotional testing for the police department. As the new year began the Pawtucket office partnered with the City once again in testing for the dispatcher's position. Pawtucket continues its involvement with testing for the Water Supply Board and police traffic clerk and customer service agent. The Center staff including the Employers Service Representatives did an excellent job organizing and running these recruitments. In total, hundreds of applicants have moved smoothly through the Pawtucket Office for a variety of municipal positions. The staff is committed to continuing its efforts of quality customer service to the City of Pawtucket as well as to all local employers. This exclusive hiring arrangement was reported to the Regional Dept. of Labor Office as a "best practice" in serving the employer community.
- **Employer Information Sharing Sessions** were held in October 2001 and January 2002. Employers in the northern RI area were invited to these sessions to learn about the services and programs available to them through the [netWORKri](#) partners including: tax credits, on-the-job training, competitive grant assistance, project upgrade and other initiatives through GRI and the Human Resource Investment Council. A special May Breakfast Information Sharing Session was held in May 2002. Employers and Board members were invited to this event. An Information Sharing Session was held specifically for community-based organizations (CBO's) in November 2001. CBO's learned about [netWORKri](#) services and resources in an effort to embrace and connect to the local community. These information Sharing Sessions have been an outstanding form of outreach and a creative alternative to traditional job recruitments in attracting employers to the [netWORKri](#) Center
- An **Customer Focus Group** was held in October 2001, and an **Employer Focus Group** was held in May 2002 to elicit feedback from the employer and job seeker perspective in an effort to continually improve the system. Their input was included in the strategic planning preparation.
- Numerous job fairs and/or recruitment efforts were held in both the Providence and Pawtucket Centers during this program year for such major employers as Rhode Island Hospital, Citizens Bank, Electric Boat, MetLife, CVS, Lowe's, US Postal Service, Leviton Mfg., A & H Mfg., and Fleet Bank to name a few.
- In collaboration with PAL, a peer support network for people with disabilities, [netWORKri](#) conducted a mini-series of workshops in June and July 2002. This series invited customers with disabilities into the Centers to assist them

with seeking and keeping a job. Topics included: the pros and cons of working, choosing a job, finding and keeping a job, and keeping your benefits.

- The Center hosted a seminar entitled “Freedom to Succeed with Your Own Business” sponsored by the Economic Development Corp.

### **West Warwick, Wakefield, Warren, Woonsocket**

#### ***Greater Rhode Island’s netWORKri Centers***

- Numerous job recruitments and job fairs were held during the program year attracting thousands of job applicants and employers. Job Fairs for larger employers included Electric Boat, Toray Plastics, Senesco, Kay Dee Designs, Blackstone Valley Security and Agentry Staffing.
- Orientations were held for a variety of employees affected by layoffs. Two major employers who participated and were affected by mass layoffs were Fleet Bank and American Power Conversion.
- In a continuing effort to encourage utilization of the center by youth, tours and demonstrations of resources were conducted for local high school students. Staff also made on-site presentations at several local area schools.
- In an on-going effort to publicize the **netWORKri**, center managers were presenters at a number of events including:

Community College of RI’s Career Fair/Resumania  
Annual Meeting of Women in Transition/RI Dept. of Corrections  
TASH New England 20001 Conference for People with Disabilities  
US DOL’s Healthy, Wealthy & Wise Conference for Women  
Center for Women and Enterprise

- Regular workshops were held for customers addressing such topics as:

Computer Basics  
Word Processing  
Surfing the Internet  
Interviewing Skills  
Career Planning  
Resume Writing

### **Commitment to Collaboration**

#### ***A Business Partnership***

Since late summer of 2001, a collaborative effort was underway to expand the recruiting base of three Rhode Island shipbuilding companies: Electric Boat, SENESCO and The Lightship Group. The aim of the project was to satisfy the employer’s workforce needs, design a process to use available funds to recruit candidates and subsidize the training

costs and offer unskilled, underemployed individuals access to good paying jobs and careers.

In addition to the employers, the partners involved in the collaboration included, the two Local Workforce Investment Boards, the Economic Development Corporation, the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI), the Department of Labor and Training's Employer Service Representatives and the **netWORKri** Centers.

A private advertising firm was hired to design the project's marketing effort. The campaign's media and radio ads resulted in an overwhelming telephone response. Orientations were conducted on-site at the Quonset Point Industrial Park (a former naval base facility now home to numerous industries). These sessions were complete with company displays, welcome messages from company executives, testimonials from welding employees and company tours. CCRI provided training information, **netWORKri** staff processed applications, determined eligibility and administered assessments and the local WIBs funded the training effort.

Since actual classes commenced toward the end of the program year, two full cycles were completed. Approximately 30 individuals had been trained with nearly a 100% placement rate. The project continues during this current program year.

## **Youth Councils**

Like the Boards, the Youth Councils continued the strategic planning process during PY2001. The focus was to involve and engage a broad cross section of the community as a mechanism to better coordinate education services, youth support services, employment training, and work readiness efforts. They continue to encourage leveraging resources in order to offer comprehensive youth programs. This is especially critical in a time of federal and state cutbacks and decreased funding to the employment and training system.

Program Year 2001 has also been a year in which the Councils struggled with the process of attracting qualified and dedicated members. Identifying interested individuals has not been an issue; however, the commitment of time necessary to work on the Councils' agenda has been more problematic. The Councils have each developed membership committees whose purpose is to continue to tackle this challenge in the hopes of making these groups truly devoted to addressing youth issues in Rhode Island.

## **Youth Programs**

### ***Program Year 2001 – Program Highlights***

*About Face* operated by the Rhode Island National Guard, targeted in-school youth ages 14-18 for participation in a comprehensive youth program offering both academics and world of work exposure. Mentoring was a key component of the program. As volunteers the mentors served as successful role models and were often from the same community. These individuals offered support, direction and encouragement to the participants.

The program consisted of a 2-tiered approach—a summer component as well as a year-round after school program. During the summer component youth were exposed to the Computer Learning Works Software (CLW) for academic remediation. This activity was combined with work experience. All About Face educational experiences are activity focused. Lecture is kept to a minimum. Students have the time to practice the skill being taught and receive immediate feedback on that practice. The daily curriculum is centered on simulations, games and role playing activities and daily life repetition activities. During the after school session, the first portion is devoted to school homework assistance and tutoring. The younger youth also participated in a “Reclaim” work-based project. An on-site, industrial products “Reuse Center” was set up. The participants were exposed to a variety of tasks including: developing an inventory of raw materials, creating a product design, creating sample projects or models, writing assembly instructions and packaging the raw materials into kits. The project developed leadership skills, team building, encouraged creativity and helped build self-esteem. Another curriculum piece was Breathe Easy. This is a unique, interactive smoking prevention program focuses on smoking prevention issues.

***YouthBuild Providence*** a ten-month alternative education program is committed to fostering an awareness of self and community in the urban youth it services. Through an innovative project-based curriculum that integrates construction training, academic courses and personal and professional development seminars, trainees gain a relevant skill foundation on which to build a more solid future. Students who plan to pursue a career in the building trades are introduced to the various unions and trained more specifically for the skill area in which they are interested. YouthBuild worksites include full top to bottom restoration projects as well as discrete plumbing, electrical, or sheet rocking projects in local neighborhoods. As they exhibit degrees of skill development and responsibility, students earn tool belts and tools that are theirs to keep at successful program completion.

In order to graduate with a YouthBuild diploma, students must meet the following requirements:

- Maintain professional conduct according to the program code
- Achieve 85% attendance for the year
- Achieve 85% academic diligence (assignment completion) for the year
- Achieve a high school credential or equivalency earned before or during the program
- Participate in 900 hours of community service at the worksites
- Complete a career portfolio

***Family Resources*** youth program stresses leadership development.

Adult and youth mentors are prominent in all phases right through follow-up. Each worksite includes at least one older youth to motivate and lead activities with the other team members. All participants develop leadership skills through interactions with community leaders and worksite supervisors. Participants also have an opportunity to attend a daylong challenge course held at the Browne Center on the University of New Hampshire Campus in Durham, NH. Youth are exposed to activities where group effort, teamwork and effective communication skills are required. A second set of activities focuses on individual accomplishment requiring team support as individuals equipped

with safety gear surpass perceived limitations and place trust in one another at heights of up to 40 feet. The Challenge Course at the Browne Center presented an opportunity for the participants to learn about themselves, gain fundamental personal skills, conquer their fears and learn how to work as part of a team.

Family Resources has also developed a linkage with Bryant College's "Rhode Island Export Assistance Center, which offers regular leadership workshops to participants.

## ***System Review and Evaluation***

A major undertaking by the State/Local staff and WIBs has been the on-going review and evaluation of the WIA system with particular attention to performance. One of the most difficult tasks has been educating the entire system to the intricacies of the performance measures—not just being able to interpret the calculations for each outcome, but more importantly understanding the impact of each measure on the program design elements. State staff participated in discussions with Local Boards and their committees, where the focus was on performance outcomes and their impact on recruitment and program design. LWIBs are now more committed to funding activities which result in achieving high-level outcomes. The review process for selecting service providers continues to prioritize past performance and achieving the program goals specified in each contract.

In addition to the review of vendor/sub-recipient activities, Local WIBs identified a team of Board members to conduct on-site evaluations of the **netWORKri** One-Stop Centers. These site visits resulted in compliance reviews and periodic meetings with One-Stop administrative staff for the purpose of sharing their findings and discussing "best practices". Written reports documented each center's yearlong activities and included the following:

- Center activities including job fairs, tours, focus groups, etc.
- Problems or difficulties encountered by the Center during the report period
- Customer use statistics: how many job seekers availed themselves of services during the report period, number of placements, customer satisfaction information
- Significant contributions by partner agencies
- Activities/events planned for the upcoming program year

As previously mentioned, an outcome of these review sessions was the development of the **netWORKri** Strategic Plan for the next year. The plan was the culmination of several months of information gathering that included partner staff meetings in each center, partner management team meetings, focus groups and training sessions with staff from Northeastern University. This was a true collaborative effort.

A significant undertaking in the evaluation process was analyzing feedback offered during both Employer and Customer focus groups. Sessions were conducted in October 2001 and May 2002. For the employer group, six (6) questions were presented:

- What do you like about the services provided?
- What may we do to provide better service?
- Do you use private employment agencies and if so, why?
- Have you attended an employer information sharing session; if not why?
- How may we assist your Human Resource Managers?
- What do you see as your training needs and how might we customize training programs to meet those needs?

Participants were enthusiastic and very responsive. Action steps were identified and included in the Strategic Plan. These focus groups will continue during the upcoming program year and will be a gauge in making improvements to the system.

Analyzing customer service feedback was also a key component of Rhode Island's contract with RKM Research and Communications, Inc. The New Hampshire firm conducts customer service follow-up for both WIA employers and participants. In addition to preparing the quarterly data, RKM will submit an annual report to include: 1) a methodological preface outlining interviewing procedures and achieved response rate; 2) an analysis of the customer satisfaction questions and ACSI scores; and 3) color graphics summarizing major findings. This information will be shared with appropriate administrative and line staff and used to improve the WIA service delivery and **netWORKri** systems.

In its on-going effort to offer technical assistance, the State, through contract with a nationally recognized workforce consultant offered a series of workshops to staff, WIB members, **netWORKri** staff, and local vendors and sub-recipients. The topics included:

- Increasing Performance
- Customer Service
- Customer Training and the ITA Process
- Counseling/Case Management

Board and staff development will remain a priority throughout the coming year.

Up to this point, evaluation of the system has been an internal function of staff. The State expects to pursue the prospect of conducting a more formal and thorough evaluation and review of the WIA system. Consideration will be given to contracting the services of an outside consultant to design and implement such a study.

## ***Cost Benefit Analysis***

Rhode Island's two Local Workforce Invest Boards received 85% of the State allotment for Adult, Youth and Dislocated Worker programs.

In program Year 2001, 515 adults received Core or Intensive services at an average cost of \$2,872 per client. Of those 194 were enrolled in either ITA's or on-the-job training programs representing approximately 40% of the total participants serviced. For the dislocated worker program, a total of 812 received core and/or intensive services at an average cost of \$2,632 per client. Of those participants 357, nearly 45% received training services. Rhode Island makes every attempt to emphasize occupational skill training recognizing that this activity should lead to higher wage gains and job retention.

Through comprehensive year-round youth programs 521 younger youth and 96 older youth were enrolled. Nearly 85% of the funds were identified for direct services during this program year. By leveraging resources beyond WIA, contractors insured the availability of the ten required program elements to all participants. The average cost per participant was \$3,573. This figure is representative of the all-inclusive nature of the program and the emphasis on offering education services coupled with life skills training and work preparation.

## WIA Financial Statement Program Year 2001

| <b>Total Funds All Sources</b>  | <b>Available</b> | <b>Expended</b>                       | <b>% Expended</b> | <b>Balance Remaining</b> |
|---------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Total Funds All Sources         | \$11,526,595     | \$7,925,129                           | 68.8%             | \$3,601,466              |
| Adult Program Funds             | \$1,449,866      | \$320,294                             | 22%               | \$1,129,572              |
| <i>Carry-in Monies</i>          | \$1,161,800      | \$1,158,661                           | 99.7%             | \$3,139                  |
| Dislocated Worker Program Funds | \$1,849,031      | \$1,605,204                           | 87%               | \$243,827                |
| <i>Carry-in Monies</i>          | \$532,082        | \$532,082                             | 100%              | 0                        |
| Youth Program Funds             | \$2,624,066      | \$1,303,498                           | 50%               | \$1,320,568              |
| <i>Carry-in Monies</i>          | \$901,187        | \$901,187                             | 100%              | 0                        |
| Local Administration Funds      | \$658,094        | \$204,723                             | 31%               | \$453,371                |
| <i>Carry-in Monies</i>          | \$268,526        | \$268,526                             | 100%              | 0                        |
| Rapid Response Funds            | \$688,224        | \$539,785                             | 78%               | \$148,439                |
| <i>Carry-in Monies</i>          | \$110,903        | \$110,903                             | 100%              | 0                        |
| Statewide Activity Funds        | \$1,282,816      | \$980,266                             | 76%               | \$302,550                |
| <i>Carry-in Monies</i>          | 0                | 0                                     | 0                 | 0                        |
| <b>Cost-Effectiveness</b>       |                  | <b>Participant Cost Effectiveness</b> |                   |                          |
| Total                           |                  | \$2,994                               |                   |                          |
| Adult Programs                  |                  | \$2,872                               |                   |                          |
| Dislocated Worker Programs      |                  | \$2,632                               |                   |                          |
| Youth Programs                  |                  | \$3,573                               |                   |                          |